

Present: Dwight Baker; Dan Chavre, Ray Day, Jr.; Dave Elliott; Miranda Leidich; Joan Michaels; Ed Miller; Holly Plackett, chair; Anirudh Sanhi, vice-chair; Tina Shereen

Excused: Carla Saulter

Provisional Members: Laila Barr, Roger Thordarson

Staff: Barbara de Michele, Community Relations Planner; Arthur Thornbury, Council Staff; Neil Strege, Chief of Staff to Councilmember Reagan Dunn

Guests: King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn

Plackett opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. She introduced Roger Thordarson, who is joining the TAC as a provisional member. She next introduced Councilmember Reagan Dunn, chair of the Regional Transit Committee.

Regional Transit Committee

Councilmember Dunn opened with brief remarks about the RTC work plan for 2008. He listed the RTC's top issues: 1) Metro's Comprehensive and Strategic Plan; 2) possible use of tolling revenue for transit; 3) expansion of Metro's partnership program; 4) Metro as construction mitigation for the Alaskan Way Viaduct and SR 520 projects; 5) Transit Now implementation and 6) the 40-40-20 formula for disbursing new transit revenues. He also said that there may be some re-adjustment of sub-area boundaries because Lake Forest Park and Renton have both petitioned to be part of the Eastside sub-area.

Councilmember Dunn said that his main purpose in visiting the TAC was to listen, and he turned the meeting over to members for questions or comments. Plackett, Sahni and Day reviewed the TAC's top three issues for 2008 – marketing, Metro's website and Trip Planner, and safety/security. Additional comments included:

- Elliott – Metro needs a good sized marketing budget to match the transit budget, perhaps a separate line item in the budget. We need to increase demand.
- Day – Metro very much needs to focus on safety and security. Ever since 9-11, and the London and Madrid bombings, we need to ensure passenger safety, and also have plans in place should there be an incident. Other safety issues include lighted shelters, better safety at park and rides. Councilmember Dunn asked the committee to research “best practices” and develop a report.
- Shereen – We should look at transit service overall. The focus has been on providing commuter service, but there are many needs for all-day service for shopping, other types of trips. I also think the 40-40-20 split prevents Metro from using its dollars most efficiently.
- Thordarson – People say that suburban residents don't take the bus. That's because there isn't sufficient service to ride the bus. Connections are poor. It's not an attractive proposition. We need adequate funding to serve all areas of King County.



- Leidich – I have a great concern about the 40-40-20 split as well. People live in an urban center for a reason, and transit is a part of their decision to choose a dense environment. I would like to see Metro market bus riding as a “cool” experience, as a hip, smart, intelligent thing to do. We should have Trip Planner capability on our PDA, just like the airlines provide. Councilmember Dunn replied that he would like to see a proposal for initiating PDA service from the group.
- Thordarson – Metro has started to do some good marketing out in the rural and suburban areas. New bus shelters are lighted, they are now providing “I-signals” so the bus driver can see people in the dark. We are getting more benches in the shelters, although young people are bending them. I would like to see Metro do a survey of potential riders.
- Baker – Metro needs to be 100% oriented to customer issues and convenience. I would especially like to see schedules on every bus stop, even the little ones. Metro needs to train drivers to be very customer friendly. Metro needs to think like Macy’s or Nordstrom’s.
- Chavre – Coming from Enumclaw to Auburn, Route 152 has the smallest bus with the largest number of riders. It’s standing-room-only every day. We need more service so more people will choose to ride.
- Laila – I live in North Seattle and I’m very pleased with the service. My big concern is with safety issues. I think it’s important for the transit police to have a very visible presence on the bus. It’s important for passengers and the drivers.
- Miller – I second Miranda, Ray, and Roger. I’m a huge rail fan and can hardly wait for the Sound Transit LINK to start. We need to ensure that transit is coordinated and integrated with the light rail system. I also second Dwight’s comments – Metro needs to improve signage and provide schedules at every stop.
- Michaels – I live on the Eastside in Newport Hills. Two years ago, I started taking the bus to Kent. It’s very difficult to get connections from the Eastside going south. Scheduling and connections could be improved. I don’t see how this system is going to work in a few years. People are really stepping up demand and it is very difficult to bring the system up fast enough to meet the needs. I am also concerned about park and rides – we need more -- and safety at park and rides.
- Elliott – Back to the issue of bus wraps. I think the County was very short-sighted when it banned bus wraps. We lost revenue that didn’t cost the County anything to get. That money could be put into more service, more bus shelters, a lot of things we’ve been talking about.
- Sahni – I’d just like to ensure that the TAC is involved in the web re-design process. [Dunn replied that he would like the TAC to come up with a list of desired features for the website and get it to him “sooner rather than later.”] It’s obvious from the Emerging Issues paper that Metro will need more funding. Has the County re-considered the MVET tax? King County did not vote for I-695.
- Plackett – I have concerns about using tolling money for bus operations. We need to watch how we fund operations, and be sure we’re using stable financing. Taking money from capital projects for bus operations is something I need to think and learn more about. I’m not opposed right now, but it does concern me.

At the end of this discussion, Chavre asked staff to explain the 40-40-20 formula. Thornbury gave a brief response and de Michele said she would get a written summary for the group. Plackett thanked Councilmember Dunn for his time and said he is welcome to attend the TAC meetings at any time.

Comprehensive and Strategic Plan

Fellows referenced the “Emerging Issues” paper that had been forwarded to the group approximately two weeks prior to the meeting. Fellows opened his remarks by noting that “there are common themes among the strategies, and all suggest that transit will play a bigger role than it has previously.” The four common themes are: 1) emission reduction; 2) preparations for expansion; 3) transportation pricing (i.e., various forms of tolling); and 4) construction mitigation.

Fellows said that the “meat” of the emerging issues relate to how Metro plans for future expansion, given the limits on taxes and other revenues. Metro has grown exponentially over the past five years, as gas prices have soared. In addition, the region is facing major transportation challenges in the Alaskan Way Viaduct and SR 520 construction projects. These issues create deep infrastructure needs for Metro. As one example, Metro needs to bring another bus base online. To address these needs at the policy level, Metro is proposing to widen partnership opportunities by allowing local jurisdictions to “buy into” the system. The approach creates numerous policy issues, such as how Metro retains the quality of its brand and service. Los Angeles tried this approach and bankrupted their system. Policies need to be crafted carefully and thoughtfully. Metro has to be cognizant that any potential partners will be asking: “What do I get out of my participation?”

In response to a question, Rob explained that three or four local jurisdictions could work together to create a single “transit benefit district” (TBD). If legislation allows TBDs, Metro would lobby for the most flexible approach.

Comments were provided throughout Fellows’ presentation:

- Day – I am quite impressed by the document. It includes safety, environmental issues, and includes strategies for suburban areas. Thank you.
- Miller -- I’m thinking about operations into the future. Are you looking at sustainable vendors? Metro needs to think from “origin to use.” Take a holistic view and a strategic view, so that policies don’t create unanticipated consequences up or downstream. You need to do a “life cycle emissions analysis” for example.
- Elliott – we cannot rely on Olympia to solve our problems. The state is facing a major revenue shortfall. Whatever we do will have to be done regionally and locally.
- Plackett – we all have to keep in mind that these are macro policies. When you have a macro plan, numerous items have to fit into it. You have to be able to accommodate plans that allow for local influences and needs, and yet keep the plan moving the entire County forward. I am well aware that local jurisdictions are facing

their own revenue challenges. They are looking to Metro to provide the services it has always provided. If a local jurisdiction provides money for a service, and then that service gets “absorbed” into the system, the boundaries become blurred and people lose track of what they’re getting for their money. It’s a very delicate line for both Metro and the local jurisdictions.

Trip Planner Sub-Committee

De Michele reported that an internal Metro and King County committee will meet at the end of the month to begin the work of re-structuring the King County, Department of Transportation and Metro websites. Given the requests for input on this topic from both staff and Councilmember Reagan Dunn, the sub-committee will hold a meeting and work on a draft work plan for presentation in April.

Vice-Chair

Miranda Leidich was elected vice-chair, to serve as chair in July, August and September. Anirudh Sahni will assume the position of chair.

Attendance at Regional Transit Committee

Ed Miller and Anirudh Sahni agreed to attend the RTC meeting scheduled for Wednesday, March 19 and send a report to the TAC.

Plackett adjourned the meeting at 8:35 p.m.